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ABSTRACT

Several parenting models are discussed in addressing the following premise: we parent the way we have been parented and, thus, parents play out resolved or unresolved childhood conflicts with their children. The following parenting models and their relevant research are reviewed briefly: the psychoanalytic model (emphasizing intrapersonal and interpersonal family dynamics); the social structural model (emphasizing parents' membership in various social, cultural, or economic groups as fundamental to their childrearing practices); and the transactional model (focusing on interactions among family members). Two attempts to integrate these models are described: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of development and Greenspan's developmental structuralist model. A developmental dialectical approach might usefully integrate the strengths of both models. Next, a hypothetical composite sketch of a maladaptive parent is introduced, and suggestions for intervention using the aforementioned models are given. Next, the main tenets of the developmental dialectical model are outlined, and their relevance to adaptive and maladaptive parenting explained, emphasizing the differences in parenting between socioeconomic classes. Finally, the case study previously presented is directly addressed from a developmental dialectical viewpoint. (DST)

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THE DEVELOPMENTAL DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO ADAPTIVE & MALADAPTIVE PARENTING

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THE DEVELOPMENTAL DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO ADAPTIVE & MALADAPTIVE PARENTING

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Why do parents parent the way they do, and what does this mean for supporting parenting efforts? Several models of parenting are implicit in the research and clinical work concerning the family (Wiehe, 1985). Below some of the existing major models of parenting and their relevant research will be reviewed briefly, clarifying the need for a more comprehensive integrative model. A case study of a maladaptive parent will be presented to clarify how each of the existing models might address it. Then, the main tenets of the developmental dialectical model will be oulined and their relevance to adaptive and maladaptive parenting, explained. Finally, I will return to the case study presented earlier and clarify how a developmental dialectical perspective might address it.

One of the most influential models of parenting is the psychoanalytic model which emphasizes intra and interpersonal family dynamics. In general, this model suggests that we parent the way we have been parented. Through the process of identification, parents play out past resolved or unresolved childhood conflicts with their children. An adequate or deformed character structure mediates between the parent's past upbringing and present child-rearing. This model suggests that consciousness of past unresolved conflicts through therapy is helpful to the parent who needs help or support.

Most available research and case studies using this model involve maladaptive or damaged parenting. These on the whole support the "intergenerational cycle" of parenting concept (Kotelchuck, 1982; Oates, Davis & Ryan, 1983). However, studies report that the majority of damaged parents lack serious personality disorders and there is little agreement in the literature on their psychological traits (Gelles, 1982; Parke & Collmer, 1975). While the stage of the science of personality and its assessment probably contribute to the lack of clarity in these findings, it is also possible that the differing results

reflect some variables not considered significant in the psychoanalytic model.

While there is little systematic evaluation of therapy for parents in their parenting role, data from the general field of therapeutic treatment suggests that therapy is more effective with intellectual people with verbal facility, where there is a common base of assumptions and experiences between therapist and client (Brill & Storrow, 1964; Grunebaum, Weiss, Cohler, Hartman & Gallant, 1982). This often translates to therapy being most effective with middle class (or higher) clients working with middle class (or higher) therapists. Thus, it seems that issues such as class are involved in behavior. The psychoanalytic model suggests that child maltreatment is a classless problem (Polansky, Chalmers, Buttenweiser & Williams, 1981; Steele, 1980). However, the evidence for this is weak (Pakizegi, 1985; Pelton, 1981). The next model focuses on some social issues that are not emphasized in the psychoanalytic model of parenting.

The social structural model emphasizes a parent's membership in various social, cultural or economic groups as fundamental to their childrearing practices. Significant groupings that have been studied involve gender, ethnicity and social class. Evidence suggests that there is a correlation between the characteristics of groups in high power positions in the society (e.g. men, whites, the well-off), and those in low power positions in the society (Veroff, Douvan, Kulka, 1981). Some even suggest that social categories such as race and gender derive their significance from class issues (Dixon, 1978; Kohn,

1969).According to this model, one's social groups create certain social or material conditions that form the basis for parenting values, ideologies and ultimately behavior (Kohn, 1969; Harrison, Serafica & McAdoo, 1984). Maladaptive parenting is thus seen as a response of overtaxed parents to stressful social situations, such as poverty.

Research supports the significance of social membership and structure in adaptive and maladaptive parenting. Gender, culture and class, for example, all contribute to one's style of parenting (Harrison et al., 1984; Korbin, 1981; Brooks-Gunn & Matthews, 1979).Also, while it is clear that most low income minority mothers do not maltreat their children and that the rich can be poor parents as well (Crawford, 1978; Stone, 1979), it seems that mothers (Brandon, 1976; Pelton,1981), the poor, (Murphy, Jenkins, Newcombe & Silbert, 1981; Pelton, 1981; Shearman, et al., 1983), ethnic minorities (Gil, 1970; Child Abuse & Neglect Programs,1977), and those lacking support systems (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980) predominate in the child abuse and neglect literature.

The focus of intervention in this model is on how the social structure supports or deters adaptive parenting. In the U.S., one's informal group memberships and private arrangements are the main forms of parenting support. The government becomes involved in families mainly under conditions of extreme poverty and duress (Kahn & Kamerman, 1976). Through the welfare system, there is an attempt to reduce stress factors associated with the parent's social situation. Food stamps, public housing and

Medicaid are some forms of assistance used for families.

The third or transactional model focuses on interactions among family members as an important explanation for parenting style. This model stresses the interaction of the parent's and the child's characteristics and family positions. For example, the working status of a parent, the husband-wife power relations, and the child's temperament and birth order, all affect parenting.

Studies of abusive and neglectful parents support some interaction effects as significant and not others. While studies of the significance of the child's gender or birth order are contradictory (Child Abuse & Neglect Programs, 1977; Oliver, 1978), there is a general tendency in research for premature, handicapped or more difficult children to be maltreated more often (Diamond & Jaudes, 1983; Graham, 1981). The correlation of some personal factors (e.g. prematurity) with social factors (e.g. poverty) makes the interpretation of these findings difficult.

Intervention in this model would include as many of the family members as possible. Individual therapy for child and parent, family therapy, dyadic parent-child interaction intervention (i.e. modeling adaptive interactions during dyad's maladaptive ones) are examples (Martin, 1984; Minuchin, 1974)

It is clear that there is evidence for each of the above models, and that each suggests significant influences on parenting. There have been attempts at integrating these models as well. While not directly focused on parenting,

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of development (1979) has implications for influences on child rearing. He discusses four levels of influences; the large systems and cultural values of a society (macrosystem), systems indirectly affecting people (exosystem), the roles, and interpersonal relations experienced directly (microsystem) and the relationship between various roles and relations across settings (mesosystem). The strengths of this model have made it a rich source of implications for adaptive as well as maladaptive child rearing (Garbarino et al, 1980; Pakizegi, 1985). Despite this, little systematic or grand scale research has been conducted incorporating all these systems or variables. Some even feel that with its current paradigms, psychology can only provide fragmented pieces of information of limited value, and that it is not in a position to evaluate integrative models (Hoffman, 1984; Sigel, Dreyer & McGillicuddy-Delisi, 1984).

Another integrative model has been Greenspan's developmental structuralist model (1981). This model basically integrates the analytic and transactional models in the understanding of maladaptive parent-child relationships. However, it has implications for child-rearing in general. Its main point is that a child's stage specific needs evoke in the parent deep feelings (resolved or unresolved) about the same needs which the parent experienced as a child. This model helps explain why parenting might go smoothly at some points in the child's development and not at others. For example, if a parent's dependency needs were frustrated as a child, the parent might have difficulty in

parenting when the child is highly dependent, but feel more competent as the child gains more independence.

Both of the above models have integrated a number of different findings. However, Bronfenbrenner's lacks a clear analysis of how the various levels interrelate in the process of change and development, and Greenspan's lacks an integrated macrosystem level of analysis. It is here that a developmental dialectical approach might be useful in integrating the strengths of the above models .

Before doing so however, I'd like to introduce a hypothetical composite sketch of a maldaptive parent and suggest how intervention might look using the different models above. ← Wendy, a black welfare mother of two children, was accused of neglecting and abandoning her children and lost custody of them to a foster family. In order to work toward getting her children back, she was court-mandated to attend a mental health clinic and therapeutic nursery for her children.

During this time, Wendy might start a weekly therapy session, during which she would explore her past and present interpersonal relationships. She was the last of nine children in a family where both parents drank. The father was alternately employed. At these times he would bring the children gifts and

drink less. When unemployed, he would sit around the house, drink, and yell at the kids. At times he would disappear for months. Her mother was often depressed and self-involved. The last time she was hospitalized for severe depression, Wendy, then seven, and her siblings were parceled out to foster families. Wendy's bedwetting problems meant that she was transferred from one foster family to another.

Wendy ran away from her last foster family at seventeen and thereafter took up with a series of men. Her children were of different fathers. When the last man she was with left, she would leave her children alone for hours and go out shopping. Often she would spend her welfare checks on expensive items for herself or the kids, leaving no money for necessary items. When at home, she would watch T.V. for hours while the children cried. The last time she left the children with a neighbor and disappeared for a few days, she was reported.

During therapy Wendy would be helped to realize her identification with her unwanted children and her neglectful parents. Associations would be made between her father's gift buying for the children when he was employed and her own misplaced largesse when she wanted to feel good. Consciousness and release of feelings associated with her own experience of neglect would be considered important in her healing.

Simultaneously, Wendy's caseworker would act as a liaison between Wendy, the foster family, the therapeutic nursery her children were with, and any other public assistance offices Wendy was involved with. In the therapeutic nursery, Wendy would see

her children once a week. She might watch the teachers do various projects and interact in perhaps different ways than she would have with the children. Perhaps occasionally the staff might give some feedback to Wendy about her interactions with her children and suggest alternatives. The plan would be to provide alternative models of parenting.

How does a developmental dialectical model approach the understanding of Wendy's parenting and the analysis of adaptive and maladaptive parenting in general? What does it add to the other models and what are its implications for the support of parenting? The developmental dialectical model examines parenting in terms of present stage needs and characteristics of parents and children in the context of their developmental history and in the context of the social systems of which they have been and are members. In a developmental model, the totality of the person is stressed as s/he develops. Present stage needs and characteristics have to be addressed as well as past events in one's life. Cognitive capabilities and needs have to be considered as well as emotional ones. Strengths have to recognized as well as deficiencies,and the conscious has to be addressed as well as the unconscious. All of these are in a process of development over time in the parent as well as in the child.

This developmental approach can be incorporated into and further expanded by the dialectical approach. The dialectical approach is one with a longstanding philosophical background and application in many fields (Tolman, 1983). However, despite the works of European psychologists such as Reich, Fenichel and

Vygotsky, its use in American psychology is more recent (Buss, 1979; Riegel, 1975 & 1976; Wertsch, 1979).

This approach stresses the integration and interpenetration of the various parts of a whole. While the integrity of each level of organization (e.g. individual, family, society) is recognized, these levels are seen as interpenetrating and transforming of one another. Behavior (in this case, parenting) is understood not only intrapersonally and interpersonally, and not only as a product of social, political and economic systems, but as impacting on them as well. Thus, the activity or agency aspect of people is emphasized as well as their being products of environmental influences. Although some things change slowly, activity, change and development are seen as the essence of people and social systems and a product of the contradictions and asynchrony inherent within and between them. Contradictions involve the unity of opposites in and across organisms and systems. While change occurs sometimes quantitatively, enough quantitative change involves a qualitative difference, leading to higher levels of development. For example, in Piaget's theory, the contradiction between the child's mental structures and those of external reality, creates a disequilibrium, that with further activity, leads to a new level of development. Also, the quantitative increase in the child's age involves qualitative transformations of the child which involve qualitatively different family interactions and dynamics.

What does this model imply for understanding developmental processes in adequate and maltreating parents and what are its

implications for the support of parenting and intervention in abusive and neglectful families? It suggests that parenting styles and characteristics are as inseparable from evolving social conditions, as they are from their developmental history. A first step then is to provide a descriptive analysis of the social structure of American family life and its interpenetration into parenting.

The overall value framework of independence and individualism in American society is closely related to its free enterprise economic structure. One consequence of this type of economic system is a hierarchical class structure in the society. As mentioned earlier, a person's social class is one of the most pervasive aspects of his/her social condition. Class has been defined in many ways and has many components. For the purposes of this paper, the prevalent social psychological definition involving education and occupation, will be used.

While American society consists of several social classes (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958), for purposes of this paper, I will deal with two segments of the society , the middle class and the poor. The middle class will refer to white collar professionals who usually have more than a high school education (e.g. teachers). The poor will refer to unskilled laborers or those who are on welfare.Some are high school dropouts and others have at most a high school education. Data clearly suggests that adults have a class consciousness and categorize themselves accordingly (Lundberg,1974). Even children as young as seven show awareness of social class (Leahy, 1983).

Some methodological words of warning are in order. Many of the studies done in the area of social class, values and socialization, are interviews. Some are observational. Many report percent differences between classes. Some use measures of association. Differences average about ten percent. Correlations range in the .20's and .30's. Many are not well controlled, with confounding variables such as the social class of the investigator. Definitions of social class vary from study to study, making comparisons difficult. Keeping these in mind, let us examine some of the findings in the area.

What a society values as ideal and good are characteristics that maintain the social structure of the society. For example, a capitalistic society characterized by large inequities between social classes (e.g. the U.S.), is likely to foster characteristics such as an "internal control" ideology. Those in power stand to gain from increasing the internality of beliefs on locus of control and stand to lose from increasing externality . For example, if one perceives the inability to find a job to be the result of one's own actions, the response is likely to be apathy or self-improvement . However, if one perceives unemployment to be the inevitable result of an economic system incapable of supporting full employment, then one's response might be less pleasant for those in power (Furby, 1979).

In addition, what the society values as ideal and good often reflect the values of the dominant class. Thus the characteristics given for a healthy personality and parenting are the same as those reported for the middle class (Lundberg, 1974).

Generally, the middle class is reported to be characterized by a future orientation in their activities. This involves planning, deferred gratification and goal orientation. This class emphasizes rationality ,activity and the individual's efforts in attaining goals (an internal locus of control). While people in this class are involved with relatives, they have more relationships with friends. Their relationships are less sex typed than the poor's. They also become involved with secondary groups and participate more in political life (Gonzalez & Zimbardo, 1985;Lundberg, 1974; Spiegel, 1982). People of higher income and education feel better about their lives, feel more in control, less demoralized and have higher aspirations in life than those in lower positions (Veroff, et al., 1981). However, there is no support for higher self-esteem in the higher social classes (Gecas, 1979).

Although the evidence is not strong and it is often indirect, the poor are reported to be present oriented, and more motivated by instant gratification (Gecas, 1979). They are also reported to be more passive vis-a-vis life's problems, to have more of an external locus of control and stress tradition and the primary group. They do not join secondary groups often and/or are not active in them. They often do not participate in the political system (Lundberg, 1974; Spiegel, 1982).

In childrearing, values of the different classes are reported to have changed over the years, with middle class values presently being more similar to that of the "experts'" (Hoffman, 1984). The middle class is reported to be more lenient,

democratic and less disciplinary than the poor. Discipline among the middle class is reported to be more oriented to internal motivations, while for the poor it focuses on the immediate concrete results of action. The former also has higher aspirations for the child, and expects the child to act independently sooner than the latter group. Among the middle class aid often flows from the parents to the (adult) children, while in the working class, it often flows from the (adult) children to the parents (Davis & Havighurst, 1969; Lambert, Hamers & Frasure-Smith, 1979; Lee, 1979; Lundberg, 1974).

Few studies differentiate between the maltreating behavior of the classes. The samples studies most are the poor, and the characteristics often reported, seem indistinguishable from those of the poor in general. Damaged parenting is reported to be characterized by harsh and inconsistent discipline and/or undercontrol, inaccurate reading of or nonresponsivity to the child's psychological needs, rejection, and age inappropriate expectations. Damaged mothers are characterized as exhibiting low self esteem, being impulsive, feeling powerless (external locus of control) and being socially isolated (Elmer, 1977, Garbarino et al.,1980; Polansky et al., 1981; Steele, 1980). The few class related findings are general in nature. For example, neglect seems to predominate in low income families (Polansky et al., 1981).

Developmental dialectics suggests that the characteristics of adequate and damaged parents' of the classes are both products of as well as contribute to the social and material conditions of

their classes. They are a product in that they reflect the internalization of external conditions of their lives. For example, the greater mobility, experience and stability of life of the middle class and the reality of more death, illness and disruptions in jobs and education for the poor (Veroff et al., 1981) reflect themselves in differences in characteristics and in parenting. The opportunity for self-direction in one's job and stability of conditions allows for rational planning and for the perception of oneself as in control. Having the welfare office in charge of your life however, and having the minimum of your biological and psychological needs met, promotes an external locus of control and an emphasis on immediate gratification when the chance is there. Having basic material needs met allows middle class people to become attentive to internal motives and needs in their children. Struggling for the physical minimums in life, leaves little room for attention to much else (Gecas, 1979; Hoffman, 1984; Kohn, 1969). The higher mobility of middle class people, due to their jobs is probably related to their having less family close by and therefore their greater involvement with friends . Homeowners (usually the middle class) are more likely to become involved with neighbors than those living in apartments (Bronfenbrenner,Moen, & Garbarino, 1984).Finally, middle class jobs that require working with ideas and symbols, might bring these parents closer to the latest developments in childrearing theory. The traditional, authoritarian bend of the working class parent reflects job conditions involving more supervision and standardization, comparative lack of contact with new thoughts

and greater attachment to the extended family (Kohn, 1963).

These internalized traits, in turn, contribute to the maintenance of the class system in their own lives and in the society. For example, a stress on the present will mean diminishing the significance of education and deferred gratification, skills necessary if poor children are to rise to the middle class.

Dialectics also focuses on contradictions, particularly on their role in development and change. What are some of these contradictions? Although much research still focuses on a unitary concept of locus of control, there is some research that suggests that one's locus of control is actually composed of two types of control, personal control and control ideology. The latter involves the culturally accepted view that individuals control their own lives. Personal control is the degree to which a person feels s/he is in control of his/her own life. For middle class people, the two are often congruent (explaining why many researchers have not noted the differentiation). For poor people, the two stand in contradiction. For example, black subjects in one study had an internal control ideology and an external personal control,reflecting their experiences (Gurin, Gurin, Lao & Beattie, 1969). It is suggested that such a circumstance of contradiction, leads to a sense of helplessness and guilt over nonperformance (Brim, 1974). Dialectics suggests that this contradiction also holds the seed for change and development, a topic we will return to.

For damaged low income parents, developmental dialectics

suggests that their powerlessness and external locus of control reflects still further contradictions resulting from the interpenetration of social and psychological structures. On the one hand powerlessness reflects a paralyzing guilt due to the internalization of external blame and responsibility (control ideology). On the other hand, it is partly a correct reflection of their reality (personal control). While they have been victimized by both their families and the society, both institutions have given them the society's individualistic message that they alone are responsible for their position and brought it upon themselves by being "bad" (short of parental expectations and lacking social skills such as delayed gratification) (Ryan, 1971). While they feel guilt and shame for their position, they simultaneously feel the injustice of their position, and defensively totally blame external conditions.

Given the above, one could argue that the psychoanalytic explanation for poor parenting is therefore applicable for the materially comfortable but not for the poor; i.e. if there are few external pressures on the well-off that would lead to poor parenting, then their poor parenting must come mainly from a familial past. However, such a conclusion is neither warranted nor scientifically efficient.

Available analyses of social conditions suggest that there are stresses associated with middle class life also. Two surveys of national samples done in 1957 and 1976 revealed that job satisfaction has gone down in this generation (Veroff, et al., 1981). The increasing bureaucratization, mechanization, de-

skilling, routine work and declining job security of white collar positions brings these positions closer to that of the working class, if not that of the poor (Abercrombie & Urry, 1983). Middle income families see more restrictiveness in their parental roles and report more immobilization (powerlessness) in 1976 than in 1957 (Veroff et al., 1981). The differences between the classes' use of control and physical punishment in parenting has diminished in recent studies as compared to the past (Gecas, 1979). In the structure of society as is, the traditional tools of freedom (education & income) are not working as well any more (Sennett & Cobb, 1972). One has to ask then what has made it difficult even for middle class parents to fulfill their parenting role?

Critics of the society claim that the fragmentation of the psyche becomes necessary in a social structure that separates mind from body (as in physical labor vs. mental work), the private from the public, the individual form the social, and work from pleasure, etc. In a profit based economic system, it is important that the consumption of commodities not lead to satiation of needs but to restless reconsumption. Thus, it is suggested that these overarching life conditions involve all the classes and their personal life and interpersonal relationships. Parenting becomes difficult in such a situation because the society's structure goes counter to the integration of the person and counter to the satisfaction of human needs. The family cannot regulate itself because the market is regulating it (Kovel, 1981). For example, the bombardment of families with

T.V. ads for new toys and foods every day means that parents often feel that they are not doing enough for their children. The children, too feel that they are being deprived if they cannot have all the new goods. A reporter concluded from the 1980 White House Conference on Families, that the family is not disintegrating. It is the systems that do or do not support it that are disintegrating. The family is in fact working overtime to maintain itself (Anderson, 1982).

In addition, the internal control ideology of the society can become an unrealistic burden on the shoulders of the middle class. In a materially comfortable life situation, it is easy to take for granted the role of the other systems in one's life. All appearances (and social messages) suggest to middle class families that it is their hard work alone that has resulted in their position in life. Witness the rise of organizations such as EST, which emphasize that individuals alone are responsible for what happens to them. These organizations cater mainly to the socially successful (Nahem, 1981). There is little analysis of all that is taken for granted before the individual's actions are effective.

With a training in internal locus of control, social conditions that support this, and educational and other opportunities that are available to the middle class, it is not surprising that parents from this class are more concerned about the adequacy of their parenting than the poor (Veroff et al., 1981). In fact, statements such as "there are no bad children, only bad parents", are more acceptable to middle class parents

than to low income parents (Nye, 1979).

Add these to a personal past of rejection & blame and it is likely that middle class damaged parents will take personal blame for their present personal and parenting problems. It is likely that contrary to the perceived powerlessness of low income damaged parents, middle income damaged parents might feel unrealistically omnipotent. They might feel a need to control most situations with their children and to blame themselves for all that goes wrong.

Developmental dialectics suggests that in a hierarchical situation the different social positions of each class has led to an incomplete emphasis on only one aspect of the situation in the understanding of their lives. While there are the personal, interpersonal , social, political and economic systems operating on who we are and how we parent, who we are and how we parent also influence the larger systems. Thus, the middle class's internal locus of control, for example, is as far from (or as close to) reality as the poor's external locus of control.

Researchers too, have often promulgated this centration on incomplete information. For example, while external locus of control has often been negatively associated with a belief in fate, chance or luck, it could in fact be an accurate reflection of aspects of reality (Gurin et al, 1969). Or, while researchers have focused on poor people's inability to delay gratification in lab situations, they have failed to account for their tolerance for frustration and delayed gratification as they wait innumerable hours in welfare offices.

In short, the integrative model of developmental dialectics

expands the analysis of parenting to include the social dimensions of past and present interpersonal relationships. Parenting problems are seen as reflections of the interaction of past unresolved personal and social conflicts with contradictions and conflicts in the parent's present life. Finally, these contradictions are perceived to contain the germ of further development and change in parents.

What are the implications of the above developmental dialectical analysis for the the support of adequate parents and the treatment of damaged parents? Dialectics' affirmation of the integrity of levels of systems suggests that all generalizations cannot substitute for knowing the individual. Thus, while the above analysis might serve as a general framework, the complexities of each individual parent and family need to be understood and supported in its own unique way.

Dialectics' stress on development ensuing from contradictions means that the acceptance and affirmation of inherent contradictions leads to adaptive development, while their denial leads to rigidity and maladaptive patterns in childrearing. For example, recall that the middle class is seen as embodying the positive values of the society and the poor and the damaged parent, the negative. There are many studies trying to increase people's locus of control, and none on how to decrease it (Furby, 1979). Dialectics' emphasis on contradictions and complexity does not support such a simple notion. It is clearly not advantageous to have people believe they can control something when they cannot. It is not realistic

for example, for parents to believe that they are the sole influence on their children's lives. Also,for middle class (damaged) parents, too much future orientation and planning leads to rigidity and loss of spontaneity. The poor (damaged) parent, however, might be better able to respond to and enjoy the present with the child. Denial of the inherent contradictions in each class's tendencies leads to each class's rigid use and exercise of one dimension of its capabilities. Affirmation of contradictions underlines the continual change and development inherent in a person and allows for fluidity, change and responsiveness.

The integrative approach of developmental dialectics also suggests that programs to support positive parenting or intervene in negative parenting have to be integrated in their life. The larger the number of systems affected, the greater the impact. This integration has to be done in such a way as to clarify the contradictions in behaviors and situations which are personally and socially destructive as well as to support the resolution of conflicts towards higher and more constructive levels of development. In some European countries, preventive support of families in their childrearing role and development (e.g. day care) is a systematic governmental policy carried on through consistent regular contact between health or educational professionals and the family. The individualistic tendency in American society has resulted in a primarily hands-off policy towards the family and childrearing by the American government. The main time that the U.S. government becomes involved in

families is under conditions of extreme poverty and duress. The case finding programs in the U.S. are a poor substitute for the more integrated European approach (Kahn et al., 1976). In an affluent society where the guarantee of basic familial needs is a privilege of the well off and not a social responsibility, this approach stigmatizes these families and puts them in a dependent and passive position.

While in the present social system, the immediate way to provide relief from pressing material needs might in fact be the welfare system, a long term involvement with this system exacerbates the problems that it ostensibly seeks to solve. The welfare system requires the poor to accept rudeness and long waits. Welfare recipients have to prove repeatedly, in writing and with documentation, how inadequate they are (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1984). Also, the intrinsic depersonalization of bureaucracy goes against the essentially personal nature of the "welfare" of people (Kovel, 1981). All of the above furthers the powerlessness and alienation of the poor. Already highly sensitized to negative evaluations, all of the above also exacerbate the cycle of self blame and lack of control that paralyzes low income maltreating parents into depressed inaction or causes them to lash out in anger at their own images in their children.

Therapy (individual or family) has been another common mode of support or intervention into family dynamics in the U.S. How does developmental dialectics evaluate this approach? It suggests that while it traditionally focuses on intrapersonal and

interpersonal dimensions, it ignores the social structures involved in childrearing. While it presents the view of the individual as changeable, it portrays social structures as given and immutable. While it traditionally focuses on unconscious emotions, it ignores conscious cognitive capabilities. While it focuses on an individual professional's attention on a family, it isolates the professional as well as the family from support from an interconnected larger group. Let us examine these in more depth.

Reality training has always been a significant part of therapy. Freud suggested that blindly accepted norms and values of the society instilled in people and the identification of the oppressed with the class which rules and exploits them, needs to be made conscious, in order to gain greater understanding of their functioning and therefore greater freedom of action (Freud, 1927/1961). However, traditional therapy has limited reality to intra and interpersonal dimensions. Social structures are not usually addressed and assuming a rather unchanging character for them, traditional therapy has often stressed the necessity for parents to unidirectionally adapt themselves to them. Not only is this an incomplete and therefore an inaccurate picture of reality, but it also serves to mystify the character of social structures and to leave them even more unchanged.

For those whose social reality is more negative (e.g. the poor), the message of the social structure's unchanging nature is both inaccurate and leads to further depression and powerlessness. If, as evidence indicates, <u>actual</u> internal sense

of control is correlated with effectiveness with the environment (and therefore more positive feelings) then modification of the poor's external locus of control is possible only under the assumption of the modifiability of the environment. If the environment is not changeable, trying to change their locus of control contrary to their experience can only increase frustration, guilt, negative affect or self-blame (Furby, 1979). One goal of therapy therefore should be to support these parents in experiencing their effectiveness in influencing the environment through the attainment of personal goals. Gradually, a longer term view of the nature and possibilities of societal change can evolve.

For those whose social reality is more positive (e.g. the middle class), lack of knowledge of the nature of the interpenetration of social structures in their personal lives prevents them from developing the ability to exert more control where they think they have little influence (in social structures), and to exert less control where they think they are the only influential variable (in the personal domain).

What form should support take to empower especially damaged parents within realistic boundaries? For low income parents, an important step involves clarifying their personal and social victimization, as a way of reducing the blame on them. While they have often accurately sensed the role of external conditions in their situation, their perceptions have not been validated socially. Only when the validity of their feelings of injustice is affirmed through the clarification of the role of others (i.e.

the parent's family and the social system) will they be able to feel the pain and the rage involved in their oppressed position. Only then will they be able to take charge of the part that is theirs to play in transforming their lives, or in accepting the less changeable. Consciousness of one's embeddedness in various systems allows one to have a more realistic assessment of one individual's role in making changes, while also affirming the individual's role as one element in the totality of systems operating.

For middle class damaged parents too, intervention involves clarification both of their personal victimization, and the social pressures involved in maintaining their social status in a hierarchical society (e.g. competitiveness, definition of a man only in terms of his job, etc.). Support in feeling the fear and the pain involved in these pressures and consciousness of the source of these feelings will allow these parents to accept, dismiss or modify them, rather than be driven unknowingly by them.

Some evidence supports the notion that awareness of the role of external factors can have a positive influence. Institutionalized old people who see external reasons as involved in their daily problems have the most positive feelings of adjustment (Felton & Kahana, 1974). Blacks who blame "the system" are more ready to engage in social action with others (Gurin et al., 1969). Crime victims who are aware of the role of external factors in their victimization sustain less emotional damage than those who solely blame themselves for the crime

(Berglass, 1985). However, the relation between locus of control, action and subjective feelings is not simple and direct. The valence of the goal involved needs to be considered as well (Furby, 1979).

The above "consciousness-raising" uses the adult's cognitive skills to reflect on her own situation. However, the more damaged the parents, the more they are prevented from using the best of their cognitive capabilities in their own service because of their emotional blocks. Accurate self analysis and positive self esteem are often reflections of the external world's view of the person. Since the personal (and the social) external world's view of (low income) damaged parents has often been negative and painful, reality based self-analysis and positive self view are not their strength. A context of affirmation, validation and support allows these parents to experience the pain and the rage that go with having been maltreated and thus be enabled to use and develop their cognitive skills in their own healing. Thus, the traditional "neutral" stance of therapists needs to be replaced with one of positive support and affirmation (Fraiberg, Shapiro, & Cherniss, 1983). While many therapists equate this with countertransference, this conscious, informed support is different than the unconscious involvement and confusion of countertransference. It is through this support that these parents start to heal and become able to integrate their emotions with their cognitions, and their unconscious with their conscious.

It is difficult for professionals working with parents to be

truly supportive and to help in the above consciousness raising if they themselves have had little training in the macro issues affecting family life. The training of family professionals often involves intra & interpersonal analyses and implicit assumptions about the unchangeability of social conditions. Just as the training of many therapists involves being in therapy themselves, so as to be better able to handle transference and countertransference, so too therapists and other professionals working with families need to examine the role of their own social status in their life, and in their professional views and practices. Effective intervention involves the maximum of support with the maximum of challenge (Bronfenbrenner, et al., 1984). Without a macroanalysis, middle class professionals' work with poor parents becomes challenging with little support or understanding (i.e. judgmental), while their work with middle class parents becomes supportive without adequate challenge.

Most family support and intervention programs in the U.S. use the "case management" approach; i.e. a professional works with a parent or family. This reflects the American value of individualism, a value also evident in the oft-noted isolation of the nuclear family. It is common, for example, for a significant proportion of housewives (41%) not to see anyone during the day (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1984). Many who do see others do so in impersonal contexts such as the supermarket. This isolation seems even more pronounced in damaged parents of low power positions. This isolates parenting from sources of support as well as from deterrants to child maltreatment.

If as dialectics claims, interactions and relationships are the medium of change, then one is led to question the case management approach as the main form of support or treatment for families. While a close relationship with an emotionally healthy and socially aware professional can be supportive or can act as a blueprint for a positive relationship, the exercise and strengthening of relating skills and the limiting of the already formed negative skills, requires more than the two involved in the therapeutic or supportive relationship.

Data available from related fields provides evidence for the positive role that support systems can play in people's lives. The social networks of normally functioning adults is larger (about 30) than that of neurotics (10-12), which is larger than that of psychotics (4-5). For the elderly, frequency of contact with others predicts life satisfaction. For ethnic minorities, living in ethnic neighborhoods means fewer hospitalizations and higher life satisfaction (Anderson, 1982). However, relationships can also exert a negative pressure. Abusive and neglectful parents' relationships have been negative and often their involvements reinforce the status quo for them. Thus, the development and maintenance of a positive reciprocal support system becomes essential for the effectiveness of this support.

Professionals too, needs positive support if they are to be effective. Burnout in professionals is often a result of the heavy burden of responsibility and guilt that they feel when individually responsible for the healing of these parents, especially when working with needy low income damaged parents. At

the beginning, the professional can start with the groups that are available to each class (e.g. family, church and neighbors for the poor, and friends for the middle class). Team work with other professionals, group therapy and parent support groups should be the modus operandi of working with (damaged) parents. Where these have been used, their success attests to their significant role in the healing process (Cohn, 1982).

Finally, dialectics suggests that while change and development might be slow and incremental, enough quantitative change will result in a qualitative difference in the parent. Support is the medium of this development. For maladaptive parents, support will enhance the painstakingly gradual process of redefining the personal and social past, clarifying the present and shaping the future. It is through this process that the damaged parent gradually becomes a more integrated whole person.

Let us now return to the case of Wendy and examine it from a developmental dialectical approach. In general, the approach would involve developing a community network through which she can be supported in developing as a parent and a person. This network would involve formal and informal contacts through which she becomes empowered through the process of clarifying the conflicts and contradictions in her personal, familial and social past and present through which she is and supported in experiencing the feelings associated with these. The network would also be a rich source of physical and emotional help and alternative ways of parenting.

More specifically, all this might be done in the context of

a neighborhood Parenting Center freely available to all the residents of the area. This Center might have a day care center for Wendy's preschooler, and an after school program for her first grader. It might have parenting courses and a library of books, films, toys and children's equipment. It might have social areas for parents to gather and to share experiences informally. It might have a "warm line" where parents can call for support and information and a "hot line" for crisis situations. It might have a pediatric clinic where all children in the neighborhood are checked regularly and preventively. It might offer individual, group and family therapy and parent support groups. As much as possible, the Center would be run by the parents and professionals from the neighborhood.

At this Center, Wendy might decide to go to individual therapy and group therapy. In these contexts, along with exploring her personal and familial past and present, she would be encouraged to understand and feel the implications of her upbringing and present life in a black urban ghetto. What are the feelings associated with being black in the U.S.? What does this mean for her as a person and for how she parents? What were the realities of her life as a growing child and how did they compare with the "good life" of affluent America portrayed on the media? How are these related to Wendy's problems with budget management and the uncontrolled buying that she occasionally indulges in? How does it feel to be on welfare and what are her alternatives? What are the associations she has learned between buying the right consumer goods and feeling

accepted, esteemed, loved, and good? What are her parenting and other strengths that have never been affirmed?

In addition, Wendy might participate in a parent support group. Since all parents at the Parenting Center need support, distinctions between damaged and healthy parents become less marked. Thus a support network would develop that because of its natural roots in the neighborhood, would operate 24 hours a day on an informal basis. Parent-child groups would provide peer models and reinforce appropriate parenting as well.

Further delineation and the final test of the developmental dialectical model lies in its wider implementation and empirical evaluation. At this point, however, it seems to hold promise. Psycho-analysis, when coupled with socio-analysis becomes a powerful tool. When freedom from one's archaic past is coupled with the ability to choose to accept or to transform one's present social reality, albeit slowly, therein lie the seeds of mental health and positive parenting.

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